

**REMARKS**

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 16 and 25 are cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein. Claims 12-15, 17-24, and 26-29 are pending. Claims 12, 13, 20, 21, 22, 26, and 27 are amended, and claim 29 is added. Claims 12, 21, and 29 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

**Reasons for Entry of Amendments**

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that amendments to the claims place the application in condition for allowance.

In the alternative, if the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of appeal. This amendment reduces the issues on appeal by amending claims 20, 26, and 27 to be in compliance with 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

The issues on appeal are further reduced by amending independent claim 12 to include the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 16, by amending independent claim 21 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 25, by rewriting objected to claim 26 in independent form as new claim 29, and by canceling claims 16 and 25.

This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that the Applicants did not fully understand the Examiner's position until this Final Office Action was received.

**Allowable Subject Matter**

The Examiner states that claims 16-19 and 25 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

As mentioned above independent claim 12 is amended to include the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 16, independent claim 21 is amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 25, and objected to claim 26 in independent form as new independent claim 29.

Intervening claim 13 remains dependent on claim 12, inasmuch as claim 12 as amended is patentable without the subject matter of claim 13.

Accordingly, independent claims 12, 21, and 29, and dependent claims 13-15, 15-20, 22-24, and 26-28 are believed to be in condition for allowance.

Further, the Examiner states that claims 26-28 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, and to include all of the limitations of the base and any intervening claims. As noted below, claims 20, 26, and 27 have been amended to address the issues under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

**Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph**

Claims 20 and 26-28 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In order to overcome this rejection, claims 20, 26, and 27 are amended herein to correct each of the deficiencies specifically pointed out by the Examiner. Applicants respectfully submit that the claims, as amended, particularly point out and distinctly claim

the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

**Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)**

Claims 12-15 and 20-24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Russo (U.S. 5,417,044). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 12 is amended to include the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 16, independent claim 21 is amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 25, and objected-to claim 26 is rewritten in independent form as new independent claim 29.

Intervening claim 13 remains dependent on claim 12, inasmuch as claim 12, as amended, is patentable without the subject matter of claim 13.

Accordingly, independent claims 12, 21, and 29 are in condition for allowance.

Further, dependent claims 13-15, 15-20, 22-24, and 26-28 are believed to be in condition for allowance due to their dependency from allowable independent claims, or due to the additional novel features set forth therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) are respectfully requested.

**CONCLUSION**

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

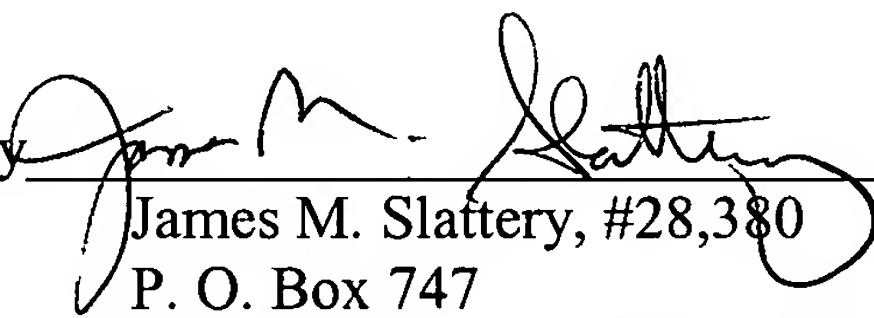
If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.17 and 1.136(a), the Applicants respectfully petition for a one (1) month extension of time for filing a response in connection with the present application and the required fee of \$110 is being filed concurrently herewith.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By   
James M. Slattery, #28,380  
P. O. Box 747  
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747  
(703) 205-8000

  
JMS:CTT/ags